DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 029 EA 022 633

TITLE Shared Decision-Making Task Force. Final Report, 1990. ACSA Special Report.
INSTITUTION Association of California School Administrators.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Definitions; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; Leadership Styles; *Participative Decision Making; *Program Implementation; School Based Management; *School Restructuring; *Staff Development; Trust (Psychology)
IDENTIFIERS School Culture

ABSTRACT

This report raises fundamental issues that must be explored by educators considering participative decision-making as part of an educational restructuring initiative. In analyzing district readiness to implement a shared decision-making model, several factors must be considered, including school culture and climate, leadership style and attitude, trust levels, commitment to staff development, current policies and procedures, and assessment indicators. Although no single, best shared decision-making model exists, some common implementation issues and challenges can be anticipated and resolved through planning. Success depends on identifying involvement levels of groups and individuals; obtaining board and superintendent commitment; clarifying jobs, roles, and accountability measures; establishing a reasonable time table; obtaining staff and constituency support; and allocating monies for staff development. To enhance professional development, training designs should use joint trainers, provide orientation to a broad audience, and train all governing bodies. (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Delapp

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SHARED DECISION-MAKING TASK FORCE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FINAL REPORT 1990

SPECIAL REPORT

ED330029

EA 022 633

The Association of California School Administrators

Introduction

Restructuring, site-based management, shared decision-making, empowerment and collegiality are all terms very much in vogue today. What those terms mean, however, depends upon the user and the context. In response to increased public concern about the condition and direction of public education in California, ACSA's Commission on Public School Administration and Leadership wrote *Return to Greatness* in 1988 stating for ACSA the directions for the future of public education in California.

Included in the report's recommendations were a number of statements approved by ACSA'S Board of Directors and Representative Assembly regarding the importance of shared decision-making to the future of education. The ACSA Board of Directors and the Representative Assembly approved the following statements as a part of that document:

The professionals at the school site – the teachers and principals – should make decisions and implement them in accordance with the district's vision and expectations.

The superintendent, as chief executive officer, must provide leadership and vision for the school district. The superintendent must select principals and then support them effectively.

School boards and administrators must take primary responsibility for creating an environment for proposing and nurturing a partnership-based decision-making process.

School culture must create a climate that motivates all within it, provides opportunities for innovation and rewards excellence.

Future relationships between central office administrators, teachers and site administrators should be lifted to the collegial level.

Decision-making at the site level should be shared by the faculty in a collegial manner while recognizing that the site administrator must ultimately have the ability to make decisions in selected areas.

Teachers are professionals. The centerpiece of a profession is a . . . partnership decision-making model built on respect and trust.

At the heart of any change is the acceptance of the partnership model of serving students. In this scenario, administrators, teachers, and parents work together to set goals for students at the school site.

ACSA's Shared Decision-Making Task Force

Chair
Ken Noonan
Superintendent
Gilroy Unified School District

Nancy Bilicich
Assistant Principal
Aptos Junior High School

Kent Campbell
Assistant Superintendent
Jurupa Unified School District

Cynthia Cervantes-McGuire
Principal
Gladstone Street Elementary School

Bev Foster
Assistant Superintendent
San Diego City Schools

Charles Freitas
Principal
Condit Elementary School

William Huyett
Principal
Florin High School

Duncan Johnson
Superintendent
Fullerton Elementary School District

Dan Moirao
Assistant Superintendent
Pittsburg Unified School District

Jack Moscowitz
Principal
University Senior High

Shared Decision-Making Task Force

Purpose

To assist members and others interested in this process, ACSA established in December 1989 a Task Force to prepare this document on shared decision-making. The Task Force examined the questions, concerns, implications, ideas, attitudes, changes, actions and results of shared decision-making in schools and districts. The Task Force has not written a "how to" guide or a recipe for implementing shared decision-making, nor has it provided a single shared decision-making model for schools to adopt. Instead, through this report, the Task Force has raised the fundamental issues that must be explored by educators looking at this issue.

Following the exploration, study, discussion and meetings, the school or the district can reach an informed, thoughtful decision on moving toward or into shared decision-making so that learning and teaching are enhanced.

Definition

Shared decision-making is a restructuring process through which the culture, organization and procedures of a school district are changed *so that learning and teaching are enhanced*. The process includes involvement of all segments of the school district community, based on mutual trust, shared responsibility and accountability.

Defining terms in relationship to shared decision-making is most simply done if "restructuring" is viewed as the **what**, "empowerment" as the **who**, and "shared decision-making" as the **how** of school reform.

Of greatest importance is what the terms shared decision-making, collegiality, empowerment and restructuring, and their processes mean to the board, administrators, teachers, support staff and parents of a school district. The definitions of those terms translate into changed roles. It is critical, therefore, before implementing any shared decision-making process, that a number of basic understandings be reached about process, roles and accountability.

Bias

There are a number of reasons why restructuring is necessary today:

- A profoundly changed student population which requires the use of more complex and varied instructional strategies.
- An increasing awareness that federal and state solutions fall short of the mark.
- A recognition that the current process is excessively rule bound.
- A recognition that professionals at the district and site levels are better equipped to design solutions to complex problems suited to the local situation.

Consequently, we do not believe that any discussion about shared decision-making, site-based management or restructuring should ever begin in the context of power or win-lose bargaining. The context must be, "How can we organize our district and schools so the instructional methodologies we use dramatically improve the success of our entire student population?"

When boards, superintendents, principals, teacher organizations and parents begin the conversation in that context, the quality and focus of the dialogue is different, and remains different.

A word about commitment. Shared decision-making is not a neutral process. It is a transforming process and it requires substantial nurturing and time. Said another way, it will require the will of all segments of the school district. To our colleagues we would simply say that this is one aspect of restructuring that will require as much from your heart as it does from your head.

Major areas of consideration and exploration

How ready the district or school site is to implement a shared decision-making model becomes a key issue.

Readiness should not be considered merely a condition which exists. Readiness is a condition to which the organization must aspire prior to the implementation phase. Readiness is a condition which should be developed and nurtured before implementation.

In this context, the considerations which follow may well become measures by which the district's or school site's readiness is measured and analyzed. Each of these major considerations is critical and essential to the success of implementation.

Culture and climate

We define culture as the way things are done in the district or the school site. We define climate as the way people feel about the way things are done. Both are important.

What is the culture of the district/school site?

What is the climate of the district/school site?

Is the current culture and climate conducive to shared decision-making? If not, how would we create such a culture and climate?

Is the district or the school site a new, growing, dynamic organization that thrives on change and innovation?

Is the district or the school site a stable, well established, respected force in the community?

Are the politics of the community and the district calm and orderly? Are there political factions that influence board elections?

What political issues should be addressed prior to moving to shared decision-making?

Are parents active participants in your schools?

Who is currently involved in making decisions at the district

or school site – parents, classified, certificated, students? Others?

Will shared decision-making help foster a positive atmosphere in the district or will it add to already existing divisiveness?

Have there been any earlier attempts to implement participatory management approaches? When and with what success?

Is there an understanding of the conceptual underpinnings to the terms "shared decision-making," "empowerment," "collegiality"?

Leadership style and attitude

Does the current district or school site leadership style encourage or discourage collaboration and shared decision-making? To what extent?

What are the current roles of principals and staff? How will these roles change?

As currently practiced does shared decision-making mean "input" or final decision authority? Are the parameters clearly defined?

What is the current level of support for shared decision-making with the following groups or individuals: board? superintendent? certificated and classified organizations? central office administrators? site level administrators? classified staff? parent groups?

Is there cohesiveness between the superintendent and the board?

Is there cohesiveness between the superintendent and the management team?

Trust levels

What is the current trust level between principals and the central office? The school board?

What is the level of trust between and among the classified and certificated organizations and management? Between the site administrators and the central office? Between the staff and the principal?

What is the level of trust between parents and community

leaders and the teachers? Site administrators? The central office? The board?

Does sufficient trust exist to allow risk taking without the fear of reprisals?

Does sufficient trust exist to allow the nurturing of a shared decision-making model or models?

Commitment to staff development

A significant amount of staff development must precede the implementation of any shared decision-making model. Equally important, all the groups and individuals that will be involved must go through the same training process to ensure that processes and parameters will be understood equally.

Is the district's/school's historical commitment to staff development strong?

Is the district/school willing to allocate funds so that adequate on going staff development takes place ?

Is the district/school willing to provide time and resources for staff development of certificated and classified staff?

Is the district/school willing to bring in and pay or develop the needed skilled trainers in this field?

How will the community members be selected for training in the shared decision-making process?

Will students be involved? How will they be involved and how selected?

Current practices

What current district or site policies and procedures would promote or hinder implementation?

What current contract provisions would promote or hinder implementation?

What is the current contract status with all bargaining units?

What is the current role of the central office? How would that role be changed?

Is the current organizational structure one that will fit in a shared decision-making environment?

What is the role of site staff in district level decision-making?

Assessment indicators

What are the current methods of evaluation used to measure student/employee/school/district performance? For example, student attendance, dropouts, etc. indicators of student behaviors.

Student testing
Employee evaluation
Effective school measures
Program quality reviews (PQR)
WASC
Peer evaluation
Site based/district surveys
Compliance review
Standardized measurements
Writing samples
Portfolios
Campus climate indicators
School Accountability Report Card (SARC)
Criterion reference
Alternate Assessment measures
- portfolios
Are there other unobtrusive measures?

How will shared decision-making change or reinforce these practices?

Who in the organization is accountable for:

- student outcomes, such as graduation rate, SAT scores, CAP scores, dropout prevention and/or tracking, student attendance?
- relations with parents?
- relations with the community?
- expenditure controls?
- purchasing decisions?
- quality and care of facilities and grounds?

- quality and amount of instructional materials?
- teacher assignments?
- student assignments?
- evaluation of personnel— certificated, classified and management?

Are participants willing to be accountable for decisions?

How?

How will shared decision-making change or reinforce existing accountability practices?

How will any changes in accountability be implemented?

Summary

You have now examined your existing culture, your attitudes, your practices, your structure, your method of accountability and your overall readiness for shared decision-making.

The reasons for becoming an organization that uses shared decision-making are complex and idiosyncratic. The answers to the questions above will be different for every school district and for each school site within a district. What benefits one may not benefit another.

The pre-eminent purpose of shared decision-making, which fundamentally alters roles, relationships and power, is improved teaching and learning. Increased feelings of professionalism, feelings of empowerment, and improved morale are all serendipitous side effects.

Implementation Issues

There is no single, best shared decision-making model. The model or models best suited for a school district or site will result from the discussions between the superintendent, principals, parents, teachers, and, at the secondary level, the students, of the school district. This section identifies the major implementation issues and challenges which can be anticipated and thus, through planning, resolved.

Who will be involved?

The development of a district's or school site's shared decision-making process requires that all segments of the district/school community be involved.

What is their willingness/readiness to be involved? How will it be assured?

Identify the level of involvement of the following groups:

- employee organizations (classified, teacher, administrator)
- entities within the district's structure
- parent groups and the community
- board of education
- students

Identify the job/role of each participant involved in the shared decision-making process. How will their current job/role be impacted? What training will be needed to facilitate a redefined job/role?

What decisions will continue to be the prerogative of the board? the superintendent? the principal?

When conflict develops regarding appropriate levels of involvement, what conflict resolution processes will be utilized? Who has the authority to convene or intervene? Who has final decision authority in a conflict situation?

What must be done?

Board and superintendent commitment

School boards and administrators must take primary responsibility for creating an environment for proposing and nurturing a partnership-based decision-making process.

Has the board and superintendent committed to providing

sufficient resources to assure success? Will they commit sufficient release time and resources for all staff participants?

Has the board adopted policies that facilitate shared decision-making?

Has the board adopted policies that encourage and recognize change?

Has the board committed resources in time and money to support staff development?

Clarity of process

The scope of decision-making becomes a critical issue that must be established so that participants know what decisions are their responsibility.

How will a common base of knowledge be developed from which a shared decision-making process will emerge?

Does everyone, including the communities served, have a common understanding of the process?

Has there been agreement on the limits or parameters of site level discretion or the latitude of the group to decide?

Are any parameters dictated by state/federal compliance issues or categorical funding regulations?

How will the scope and parameters for the school-based decision process be established?

Have district policy and procedure and contract provision restrictions been identified and agreed upon? Have the participants addressed the potential need for a waiver process?

What current practice issues might hinder or enhance the process and how have they been addressed?

Do the site level administrators feel their views and concerns have been properly heard and sufficiently heeded?

Clarification of jobs and roles

Shared decision-making will change the current roles of the participants, particularly teachers and principals. When

coupled with site-based management, shared decision-making profoundly changes the role of the central office.

How receptive have personnel within the district been to past change? What is their readiness for change?

Is the leadership of the district committed to change?

How will job/role and responsibilities change?

Are those changes well understood?

Will any job role changes impact any existing contractual agreements? Do the agreements need to be rewritten?

How will the role of central office personnel change?

Are administrators willing to share power and accept greater group participation?

Does the community want or expect more substantive influence in the operation of the school? Are they willing to take the time needed? To be trained?

Accountability measures

Who is ultimately accountable for decisions that are reached through this process must be clearly understood. Which group? Which individual? Each must understand their accountability and how success will be measured or determined.

How will student learning be enhanced by shared decision-making?

Do those who will be held accountable know what they will be accountable for, to whom and by when?

Does this model require a different kind of accountability? If yes, is it in place and understood?

How will the participants measure the success or failure of the shared decision-making process? How will they implement strategies to continually monitor and adjust the process?

Is individual, department and site accountability clear and understood?

When implementation will start

Are the timelines for implementation reasonable? Do they give special cognizance to the length of time needed to implement complex change?

Is the training sequence matched to the implementation strategy and timeline?

Where implementation will start

Will this be a departmental or grade-level segment, a voluntary pilot or district-wide effort?

If voluntary, what will be the process for expansion? What is the timeline for district-wide implementation?

Does the district have sufficient internal resources to match the implementation schedule?

What contingency plans are in place for faster implementation if staff and parent interest exceeds expectations?

What contingency resources and plans are available if unforeseen resistance emerges during implementation?

How implementation will start

It is essential that staff and constituency support be developed. The decision to implement a shared decision-making model implies utilizing a process which will have involved a large number of staff and patrons over a significant period of time. Support is created by involving all participants in the development of the process. Shared decision-making is a time and resource intensive process.

Have all participants been trained in the shared decision-making process, including the importance of data collection? Do they understand the limits of the process?

Who should be the "key" planning group and how will they be linked to their constituency groups? Is there a clear strategy for linking to all levels of the organization for their planning input, ideas and reactions?

How will a culture and climate be developed to encourage a cooperative group effort?

Has a communication loop been created?

What mechanism or process do we utilize for dealing with disagreements about aspects of the process between and among constituency groups?

How do the participants plan to make the process work when there is difficulty reaching consensus?

Budgetary considerations

The biggest budget consideration will be the investment in staff development. An investment in people will require release time and bringing in skilled trainers. The implementation of shared decision-making is also going to take time, and it may be stressful time. Districts would be wise to set aside some contingency funds for times when principals and teachers are feeling very, very stretched. Investments in time for staff planning and energizing, site discretionary money, bringing in a special follow-up consultant to help work through problems can all have very special and positive results.

Districts should also contact local businesses for financial and staff resources. Many are eager to assist this kind of effort.

Professional Development and Growth

Because shared decision-making is a joint effort, it is suggested that the following features be included in any orientation or training design.

Use joint trainers

Identify and develop trainers from the administration, parent groups, certificated and classified associations. This will further model the joint nature of shared decision-making. Outside consultants could be utilized to train the joint trainers.

Provide orientation to a broad audience

You want as many people as possible within the education system to understand at least what shared decision-making is and how it works. Providing orientation to parents and larger community groups can be useful.

Train all governing bodies

Board members, employee association boards and management boards will be assuming new roles and need training to help them be effective in those roles.